

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 27 March 2012

Subject: Planning and Technology

Portfolio Holder: Councillor John Philip

Recommending:

That the report of the Planning and Technology Portfolio Holder be noted

Planning

Forward Planning

Duty to cooperate

As part of the Council being able to demonstrate that we have fulfilled our duty to cooperate with key bodies I have met with both the Rural Community Council of Essex and with the City of London Corporation. I will be having a further meeting with the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority.

With the RCCE we discussed our approach to the Local Plan and how that would tie in with areas that wanted to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. There was acknowledgement that the input from Town and Parish Councils could reduce the need for a Neighbourhood Plan and the associated costs.

A profitable discussion was had with the City where we were able to cover areas where our aims were similar. As we both have geographical information systems we are going to explore information exchange to improve the evidence base for our Local Plan

Staffing

A Technical and Information Officer started work in the Forward Planning team the week commencing March 12th for one year. This post was created primarily to support the delivery of the Council's Local Plan.

An Administration Assistant has also been appointed to a one year post and is starting work the week commencing the 19th.

Local Plan

The Council has appointed Fortismere Associates to provide project management support for the delivery of the Local Plan. Fortismere are currently providing on-going useful support to EFDC on the delivery of the Local Plan, mainly by reviewing some evidence base documents and also providing input to the Local Plan timetable and offering general advice around on-going work that needs to be completed. Fortismere Associates has the benefit of knowing our district and the work we have completed so far and also importantly has a good

track record of assisting other Councils in implementing successful Local Plans. The next major milestone for the Local Plan is the Issues and Options consultation in late June through to September 2012. The budget for the project management support has been capped at £72,000 as per the proposal submission from the consultants, who will be formally appointed by the last week of March. The fee will be met from the allocated Local Plan budget.

Members will have noticed the information on the Strategic Land Area Assessment that is being held on 30 March. I would encourage as many as possible to attend this as it will give an early view of the results of the consultants work and provide a basis for understanding the inputs to the Issues and Options consultation.

Technology

Wireless Broadband

Over the past few weeks, ICT have attended site visits with the successful supplier, Buzcom, at both the Civic Offices and Parsonage Court. Administrative issues are also progressing well and it is hoped that work installing the aerials will commence shortly.

Website replacement

The website replacement project is progressing well. An upgrade to the existing forms package from Firmstep will be implemented alongside this project. This updated version will allow staff to monitor all enquiries submitted via the website and also has the potential to allow the public to view the up to date situation of their enquiry themselves.

Following a representation from the North Weald Airfield (NWA) management team, the Website Development Board has agreed to bring forward a beta version of the NWA element of the new website to promote NWA and boost income leading up to and during the Olympics. It is anticipated that this will be available publicly during April.